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INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
OF  
**Ibra C. Blackwood**  
GOVERNOR  
TO THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA



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STATE DOCUMENTS

Regular Session Beginning January 13, 1931

PRINTED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON PRINTING  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

*Gentlemen of the General Assembly:*

In conformity with time honored usage and well recognized procedure, I have just taken the Constitutional oath preparatory to the commencement of my duties as Governor of South Carolina. In pursuance thereof, I shall briefly, though not fully, indicate some of the matters of major importance that demand the attention of the present General Assembly. In addition to the matters at this time recited, there will be numerous other matters that will be presented by special message to the General Assembly from time to time as the necessity develops, during the progress of the session. Such is the general condition of our country, both State and Nation, that those who are charged with the duty of leadership and the enactment of legislation should approach their grave responsibilities with all the wisdom, experience and earnestness that they can possibly bring to the task. Rarely, if ever, have we, as people, confronted so serious a situation. Past expenditures in many instances mounting to great deficits in the various political units of the State and a deficit of approximately Five Million Dollars in our State Revenue, finds us in a perplexing situation. In the face of these difficulties, we are confronted with the demand for the fullest and most efficient service by our various public institutions. With past expenditures there have grown apace the desire and the demand for a larger measure of public benefits. With this morbid situation we confront the future, at the beginning of the year 1931. We do not have to deal with mysteries, theories or speculations, but we are called upon to deal directly with a situation that is simple and well known to us. We do not even have to know the cause of our troublous circumstances, although it is not far to seek nor difficult to find. It suffices for our purpose that we proceed at once to apply the remedy that is best known and nearest at hand.

## TAXATION AND REVENUE

So changed is our present status from that of former years that we must proceed along different lines for the solution of our tax difficulties. A cardinal principle that we cannot ignore is that taxation should be equalized, that is, equitably distributed



in accordance with values taxed, or incomes, vocations or benefits upon which taxes are levied. There may be instances of error in matters of information concerning values, incomes and benefits, but when once correctly ascertained, there is no excuse for discrimination among classes of property or individuals who pay taxes. The present General Assembly should seek in every possible way to correct the inequalities and discriminations that obtain in tax matters in South Carolina. For the encouragement of farmers, particularly, and the owners of homes and real estate, generally, the present state-wide tax should be lifted from real estate, and I am confidently hopeful that the present session of the General Assembly will enact such a provision. In pursuance of the Constitutional Amendment authorizing classification of property for purposes of taxation, I would recommend an appropriate graduated tax on intangible values. However, great caution and careful consideration should be given this feature before passing the Act with a view of bestowing fair treatment upon the various classes and qualities of intangible values and securities. It is extremely important that nothing be done that would approach confiscation or destruction or that would so discourage the holders of such values and securities as to cause them to withdraw from the State. For the present and for the immediate future, I would recommend that the proceeds from this particular feature of taxation be devoted to the retirement of the existing deficit. It appears to be necessary that the present indirect tax be continued and that other commodities similar in character to the ones now being taxed be embraced in the catalogue, thus increasing our revenue to some extent by indirect taxation. It is especially desirable that our tax laws be so clear, equitable and stabilized as to be easily understood by our own people and those abroad with the hope that our State may become attractive, on account of its fixed tax laws, and thus induce outside industry and homeseekers to enter our State.

As an aid to our revenue and, incidentally, a reduction of taxes generally, I recommend to the favorable consideration of the General Assembly a Bill, introduced during the session of 1930 by the then Senator from Dillon County, which purported to provide for the method of issuing, handling and payment of duly authorized bond issues, notes and other obligations of the State or any political sub-division thereof by the Sinking Fund

Commission, authorizing the State to underwrite the obligations of the various counties and subordinate political units with the hope of saving the difference in interest charge, which would amount to a vast sum, probably in excess of Two Million Dollars annually. With some careful study and clarification, it appears that this Bill can be made workable and practicable and, in addition to the vast saving of interest, it would operate to give the State larger powers of scrutiny into and supervision over county affairs, which, in the view of recent developments in some of the counties, appears to be most desirable, provided that in its unfolding and development there appears to be no unyielding Constitutional conflict.

As a further aid to the reduction of taxes, I would recommend that the present 6-0-1 school law be revised so as to make attendance and not enrollment the basis of claim for State aid and to fix what is known as the teacher load in the light of a comparison with the other progressive educational states of the South. According to well-informed exponents of public education, it has been estimated that an amendment in these respects would save the State at least Five Hundred Thousand Dollars annually.

Further, as an aid to the reduction of taxes, I would recommend every curtailment, reduction or possible saving that can be employed by each department of the State Government and that, insofar as it can possibly be impressed upon the various counties by their representatives, they do the same. This is an hour when the people of our State are being summoned, as to war, to resort to the most rigid economy in both public and private life that we may reclaim our grand old State so rapidly yielding to extravagance and indolence. This is no time to temporize with sentimental fancy. We must awaken every patriotic citizen, who has a part in the public service of this State, to his or her responsibility to respond to this distress call of our State.

As a further aid to economy, I would recommend a ratification of the Constitutional Amendment authorizing biennial sessions of the General Assembly with the mental reservation, however, that this is only desirable from the standpoint of economy and not in that it lengthens the duration between meetings of the General Assembly. In this connection, I will suggest that the

various County Delegations agree upon all local legislation and to the fullest possible extent transact their local affairs in their various counties where their performance may be more fully known to and observed by their constituents. This will encourage thrift and will abbreviate the sessions of the General Assembly.

## AGRICULTURE

Viewing with alarm the distressing condition of agriculture, as manifested by numerous foreclosures and the exodus of thousands of good, honest people from the farms into centers seeking other vocations, and the poverty and desolation in agricultural life generally, I would recommend that, commensurate with sound business policies generally, the State employ its great powers to the fullest extent to relieve the stricken farmers of their distressful plight. We have made some progress in recent years, but in the main our agricultural efforts are greatly lagging. It appears that our achievements have been almost altogether in productive lines and that we have done nothing, or but little, to enhance the farmers' welfare in other directions. The thing that we most definitely need at this time is such a marketing system as would enable the farmers of the State to be certain of a ready and dependable price for their products and to enable the consumers and the handling merchants such a distribution as would accommodate itself to the needs of our people. If this were accomplished, it would naturally stimulate greater production and arouse the interest of the produce merchants and the consuming public in the home products of our State. In conjunction with this there should be initiated a movement to encourage people to buy and consume home grown products and to encourage merchants to handle such products. With this accomplished, there would be no reason for our farmers to confine themselves to the one cotton crop idea any longer and diversification of crops would become an easy reality in our State. In conjunction with this, we should go further and encourage canneries and storage plants to be established at various points over the different parts of the State. This would afford employment to thousands of unemployed people and would utilize a great deal of our uncultivated lands and go far toward liberating our farmers from cotton growing serfdom.



In addition to this, everything that possibly can be done to develop and exploit our natural resources, without resorting to extravagant expenditure of public funds, ought to be done and we should encourage with patriotic enthusiasm the conservation of our forests, hunting grounds and fishing waters and enhance them to the fullest practicable extent. There is, in my opinion, a boundless range of wealth embraced in the wooded stretches, swamps and wilds of our State and it behooves us with all vigilance to protect and preserve them. We should eagerly seek such appropriations as the Federal Government is disposed to make to develop the dormant resources of our rural districts, such as the draining of swamps, conserving highlands from erosion and the reforestation of our depleted timber lands to the end that at some time not distant in the future we might have a vast wealth where there is now waste.

## EDUCATION

Our educational status is in most respects quite satisfactory and in all respects has made rapid strides during the last decade, but there is manifestly great need of revision in respect to method of obtaining financial support. So laudable is the purpose of a community, county or state to afford its children an opportunity for a liberal education that many faults might readily be excused, but, having made the progress that has been made, there is no good reason why we should not have a perfectly consistent and modern method of financing. The teacher easily takes rank among the foremost of our public servants in worthy performance, yet there is manifest in our present school system a fallacy or defect that should be remedied. In the exalted and unselfish field of public education there should be the absence of every vestige or trace of hypocrisy and deception and naught but candor and honesty should be tolerated as a part of the fabric of our school system. This being the case, as has been indicated in a previous section of this message, the 6-0-1 law should be revised in respect to its method of procuring State aid. No longer should enrollment be made the basis of extending aid but, by an amendment, average attendance should be made the basis of aid from the State. I would suggest the importance of a thorough study of the county unit plan and, in

the event it appears to be clear of practicable difficulties of execution, its adoption as a part of our school law.

It occurs to me also that the compulsory attendance law should be strengthened and made more definite and emphatic and its enforcement insisted upon more rigidly. Not only is the State interested in seeing that every boy and girl within its borders has an opportunity for a common school education, but the State ought to be interested in seeing that such opportunity is not, by the indifference of parents or even the pupils, neglected or refused. The State is interested in the welfare of the youths themselves and also on behalf of the State, for the hope of this State to an incalculable extent, depends upon an educated citizenship. The greater number of boys and girls the State can educate and the more thoroughly they can be educated the fewer of them will the State have to rescue from poverty and shame in the future and the more will society be immune from the ill-advised conduct of an ignorant and unworthy citizenship. Our State will never have a loftier mission than to administer to humanity in humanity's greatest need and in the State's greatest capacity to administer. At no time and under no circumstances can the State wield so powerful an influence as during the facile and tender years of childhood, as it extends a helping hand to public education. There is another feature of education that might at this point be stressed to which the State's educational contribution is but a tributary and that is the domestic training and parental influence to which every child is entitled. If this is neglected, the State is at a great disadvantage and, if both are neglected, the child is almost hopeless and becomes a liability instead of an asset in most instances. One of the great follies of modern civilization has been that too large a number of parents neglect their duty at home and when it is all too late expect the State authorities to take hold of the child and make a success of him. It is our hope to practice the most exacting economy in the conduct of our public schools without inflicting the slightest degree of injury or retardation. It is our further hope that we may more wisely discern where to build school houses and how to distribute and convey the pupils without entailing duplicate effort upon the State. In this connection, we may do well to consider very carefully the wisdom of repealing the present law providing for State aid for con-



struction of additional school houses. Our school system has cost us much and is of inestimable value and the remedies that we hope to make must be made without the slightest injury to this, the richest field of Governmental endeavor.

### LABOR LEGISLATION

Any agitation that is calculated to engender prejudice between laborers and their employers is always unfortunate and particularly so at this very critical time in our industrial life. There can be no simpler proposition than that, in order for the employees to have regular employment and prosper, it is necessary for the employers to enjoy a profitable business and for their plants to have a successful administration. The warfare should not be between the employer and the employee, for they are at this time standing upon common ground and should be arrayed against such extraneous forces as operate against the dual interest of both classes. It is of vast importance to all of the interests of our State that our industrial and manufacturing enterprises operate successfully and continuously and that the workers have profitable and uninterrupted employment. This would stimulate trade and commerce and would strengthen the purchasing power of the consuming public and offer a more liberal market to farmers and producers for their products. For many other reasons are we all vitally interested in the welfare of both capital and labor, if you choose so to classify these two interests. There are, however, some simple enactments that I would recommend for your consideration.

*First:* That the law be so amended that no minor under eighteen years of age be permitted to do night work.

*Second:* That no minor under sixteen by permit or otherwise be allowed to work in textile plants or cotton mills.

*Third:* That the mills or textile plants be required to adopt some established uniform hour for starting up in the morning and likewise a fixed time for recess or cessation of work for dinner for the convenience of the housewives and for the improvement of health conditions generally.

*Fourth:* That the night work hours be fixed at the same number of hours per week as day work.

I would recommend to the favorable consideration of the General Assembly an Act providing for a fair and just Workmen's Compensation Law. I would, however, suggest that it be thoroughly studied and carefully considered before adoption so as to make it adaptable and workable under the diverse conditions that obtain in this State and which will be fair and equitable to both employee and employer. It is apparent that such a law would mutually promote the interest of employer and employee and work for harmony and good will. Toil is the destiny of the human race and those who engage in honest labor justly demand our respect and commendation, and the State could have no higher interest than to contribute to the welfare, happiness and progress of the vast multitude of our fellow mortals who do their part of the work of the world and at the same time, in order that we may the more largely contribute to the working man's welfare, we must protect and encourage those institutions that furnish him employment. Just in this connection, I would suggest that the corporate interests of this State, particularly railroads and textile corporations, are being taxed to the limit of their endurance and that we should reckon carefully before imposing any additional burdens upon these two classes.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COURT REFORM

Obedience to and respect for the law constitute a large part of any civilization. The safety and happiness of the people demand obedience to the law on the part of the people and enforcement of the law by the agencies of the Government. During the troublous period of recent years there has obtained a rank degree of sentiment that tends to ignore and transgress the law. This condition has operated to such an extent that many thoughtful people are alarmed at what to them appears to be a moral decadence of nation-wide or even broader import. Our State so long and so well known for its strict adherence to the cardinal principles of law enforcement should awaken to the great importance of checking any such tendency. The law enforcing sentiment is at all times reposed in the hearts and minds of the people and the actual performance of the functions of law enforcement agencies is an expression of the recognized will of the people. So long as we have a good citizenship and



happy homes about which are entwined the vital nerves of society, we will have efficient law enforcement. There are, however, some reforms that are necessary to aid the law enforcing agents in the performance of the will of the people. In many respects our Criminal Court procedure has grown obsolete and is no longer capable of accommodating itself to a speedy disposition of the increased volume of Criminal Court demands. I would suggest the importance of appointing a committee of Judges, Solicitors, eminent lawyers and experienced citizens from the various walks of life, with the view of formulating a revised Court procedure, whereby we could accelerate the trial of both Criminal and Civil cases. The law's delay has long been a bane of the legal profession and should be remedied. Our State is distinguished for the ability and the character of its Judges and Supreme Court justices and yet they are handicapped by the frailty of our procedure. From time to time there arises a state of congestion in the various circuits of the State and in the Supreme Court that presents perplexing difficulties. In our Circuit Courts we need longer and more frequent terms in a majority of the Counties, that cases may be disposed of within a reasonable length of time. In the larger Counties, County Courts would probably solve the problem, but in the smaller Counties where Court convenes but three or four times during the year, there is the necessity of more frequent terms. The present law regulating peremptory challenges in Criminal cases should be amended and made definite and certain. As it now is, there is diversity of interpretation as to the meaning of the Act. I would suggest that it should be simplified and in so doing that the State be allowed the same number of peremptory challenges as the defendant. Under the present law where there are several defendants in a felony case, twenty peremptory challenges are allowed on the theory that each defendant should be allowed ten challenges and even in the present situation with 36 jurors from which to draw, if all parties exercise their full number of challenges there would be only six jurors. There are a number of such baffling features in our method of drawing petty jurors, all of which could be simplified by limiting the number of challenges and placing the State and the defendants on equal grounds. I would further suggest that the usual disqualifications of witnesses that now obtain be removed and that



all the facts and all the light that can be shed upon a case be permitted to come forth and make the jury the judge of the quality and sufficiency of the testimony. This appears to be in accord with the trend of recent decisions of our own Supreme Court as well as in other Jurisdictions. This would abbreviate and simplify many chaotic court house experiences. There are numerous ways in the trial of a case by which there can be established that degree of credibility to which any witness or any feature of testimony may reasonably be entitled to have. The exemption of a witness from testifying on the grounds that his testimony might incriminate him is another retarding feature in trial procedure and while the testimony of a witness should not be used to establish his guilt, in a subsequent criminal accusation, he should not be excused merely because he is willing to assert that he is standing on his Constitutional rights.

Another needed reform is the abolition of the distinction between a principal and an accessory in crime. The same rule should be made to apply in felonies that now applies in misdemeanors and in this way avoid many instances of confusion. There should be a provision abolishing the distinction in felony cases between a principal and accessory and make all persons connected with the commission of a crime principals.

All of the laws should be enforced with vigilance and dispatch and no law should be indifferently enforced or ignored because it happens to be unpopular. So long as it is a part of the Statutory law of this State and has the sanction of the Constitution, it should be enforced. In this connection, I would recommend that the Prohibition Law, with the other important laws of this State be vigorously and fearlessly enforced and that the fact that there is difference of opinion as to the success of its enforcement or the wisdom of its continuance be not accepted as an excuse for receding from the enforcement of this important provision of our law. It has been well established that too many laws improperly and feebly enforced do not enhance respect for the sanctity of the law. We cannot hope by numerous enactments to substitute the mandate of the State for the elements that should be built into the structure of every life by parental influence. It is at home that the moral and mental fabric is woven and given the power of resistance to fortify against the temptations of life. By Statutory enactments and

relentless enforcement we may fill the jails and penitentiaries and enlarge the chaingang forces of the county, but we cannot supply those elements that were omitted at home that might have saved a boy or girl from prison and disgrace. There is no more important thing that could happen to our country than that there should be a revival of home discipline for such influences are infinite in importance and deathless in duration.

With a view of strengthening the Prohibition Law enforcement in this State, I would suggest that, for possessing quantities of whiskey less than one gallon, the crime be within the Magistrate's jurisdiction with a penalty of not less than \$50.00 and not more than \$100.00 or thirty days on the chaingang. This would expedite the disposition of a vast number of perishable cases and protect the State against the usual criticism that the poor and unfortunate small violators of the law are punished while the big violators go free. Our courts have been brought into contempt by devoting so much time and energy to the conviction of trivial cases that should be tried in a subordinate court. When this is done, I would increase the penalty for the major violation of the Prohibition Law, that is, for transporting, manufacturing and selling. In these cases I would suggest a penalty for the first offense of not less than one year nor more than two; for the second, not less than two years nor more than five. This will enable the law enforcing agencies to reach the source of the liquor traffic and to visit punishment upon those who justly deserve to be punished. I make this suggestion with the sincere belief that it will be helpful to the enforcement of the Prohibition Law.

### REVISED BANKING LAWS

Our banking situation in South Carolina has reached a critical stage. It is not only unsatisfactory from the viewpoint of creditors and depositors but equally hazardous from the standpoint of officers and stockholders. So sweeping have been the influences that move toward financial disaster for institutions and individuals that many of our banks, under good management, have been compelled to close their doors. The situation has been variously diagnosed and in nearly every instance it appears that there should be some prescribed policy fixed by the State that cannot be varied without criminally transgressing the law, where-

by our banking institutions may safeguard themselves and the public against calamity. Such is our present status that it will be difficult hereafter, unless conditions are remedied, to find capable and satisfactory men who are willing to take the hazard of organizing and managing a bank. A plain, strong Banking Act should be formulated, either by some experienced business man or a committee of such and presented early during this session for the consideration of the General Assembly. Among other provisions, it should require some sort of insurance or indemnity to cover all public and trust funds on deposit and make ample provision for frequent audits and thorough investigations. In connection with the foregoing suggested regulation, I would recommend an Act reducing the interest rates on all loans to six per cent, with a provision for special contract for seven, thus making it one per cent less than it now is. Nothing in our economic structure is so treacherous and subtle as interest-bearing obligations. We should not only be eternally vigilant in respect to making new obligations and assuming additional interest-bearing burdens, but we should awaken as from a nightmare to the importance of discharging the interest-bearing obligations that are now outstanding. The difference in the interest rate is in a sense negligible but, in the long stretch of the years, it is sufficient to amount to the difference between financial slavery and financial freedom. No people can indulge promiscuously in borrowing money at eight per cent and escape impoverishment. This is not designed to impair the prosperity of those who loan money, but it is a suggestion for the welfare of the vast multitudes of people who find it necessary to borrow.

As a further police regulation of the State, I would suggest that the laws regulating highway traffic be definitely revised with a view of further protection to lives and property and, incident to such regulations, it would be wise to require owners of motor vehicles to procure indemnity insurance in a sum of not less than \$5,000.00 for the purpose of protecting innocent people and their property from reckless and irresponsible drivers. This would be a wholesome Statute from a number of viewpoints.

I crave the privilege as Governor to enjoy the cooperation of the members of the General Assembly in an effort to reduce our tax burdens and place our State upon a sound financial basis, however much it may tax our powers for study and investiga-



tion, or however largely it may compel us to resort to the unpopular necessity of reducing and eliminating public expenditures. It is my desire that we may go hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder in the advancement of every worthy public institution and public service, but that we stand steadfast and unyielding in our determination not to increase the taxes upon the farmers and owners of real estate. If we must practice the severest self-denial in order to maintain this stand, let us endure it.

I am gratified with the consciousness that in the General Assembly I shall be supported by able and worthy allies and that in the combined strength of their reason, good judgment and patriotism we shall be abundantly able successfully to meet any difficulty that may confront us.

In conclusion, I would remark that it is gratifying, in the midst of all of our confusion, that we are approaching a hopeful period, and that however great may be our ills, we are so endowed as a race and by inheritance and attendant circumstances that we will not be subdued. It behooves our public officials from the lowest to the highest to direct their energies along unselfish, non-partisan and non-political lines. Every act that is performed, every appointment that is made and every decision that is reached by the pursuance of political expediency is fraught with weakness. However resourceful and capable a public servant may be, he becomes helpless when he loses the power to act in behalf of the State independently of personal or political friendship. It is to be hoped that those who constitute the membership of our present General Assembly will view our State and its people as a whole and that we all may become so patriotic and earnest in our efforts to alleviate the burdens and afflictions of suffering humanity, to brighten the pathway of the rising generation and to improve the living conditions of our people that we shall submerge every motive or interest that might possibly prevent and, regardless of any distemper that might assail us individually, let us, as representing the official ranks of South Carolina and relying upon Divine Grace, rise triumphantly over any such circumstances, and when we do all will be well with South Carolina.